LOS TULARES

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A Shooting in Plano

By Leland Edwards

Alexander Thomson was not expected to be involved in a shooting. He was from one of Tulare County's pioneering families, and at forty six years of age in 1902 farmed at Plano, had a large family and had no trouble with the law. It was with consternation and surprise the Porterville community learned on December 30, 1902, that Alexander Thomson shot Timothy Slaughter at the Thomson home over what appeared to be a trivial matter.

Thomson's parents were William A. Thomson and Jane B. Tilton Thomson. William Thomson was born in Ohio during September of 1825. His father was from Scotland, and his mother was born in Pennsylvania. Jane Tilton was born in New York, and she married William Thomson in Ohio. Alexander Thomson was born in Ohio in September of 1855. The family migrated to California, where Alexander was married in 1878. Alexander's wife, Clara, was born in Missouri in 1860.

Alexander and Clara Thomson had seven children. William A. was born in California in November 1879. He was followed by Frank A., who was born in 1881. Thereafter, the family moved to Oregon, where Velma J. was born in 1885. Fannie J. was also born in Oregon, but after her birth in 1887, the family returned to the Plano district in Tulare County. Harlan was born there in December of 1890, and Guy followed him in February of 1893. George was born during March of 1895.

William Thomson and Alexander Thomson farmed in the Plano district, and, in addition, Alexander worked about the area as a farm laborer to support his large family.

During December of 1902, Alexander Thomson rented his

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Harvesting Grain in 1885

By Jeff Edwards

With the harvesting season in full swing here is a view of an early push header and the header bed, in an area now under Success Lake in 1885.

The horses on the sickle were behind and pushed the sickle that cut the wheat and the belt carried the grain up and into the header bed that stayed beside the header. Header beds were low on one side and high on the other. The grain was hauled to a stationery harvester and threshed. (There is an excellent example of a header bed at Mooney Grove.).

Most of the header beds had a canvas on the bottom and the load of wheat could be rolled off by a team of horses hooking on to the canvas. Then the canvas was replaced on the bottom of the bed and the process resumed.

In the back of the picture you can see another header bed ready to take the place of the one in front that is almost full. Two teams were used on the header beds and four horses were hitched four abreast on the header that did the cutting.

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A Shooting in Plano

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team of mules to Tim Slaughter. On December 30, 1902, after finishing his work with the mules, Slaughter went to the Thomson home to settle the bill. Each man totaled the bill, and there was a six dollars difference in their figures. A quarrel ensued, and in their anger both men engaged in insultive language. Thomson called Slaughter a "liar". Apparently, Slaughter attempted to stall, or intimidate, Thomson by making a move with his hand as if he were going to draw a pistol. Perhaps he was unaware that Thomson was armed, but whatever the case was Thomson drew a revolver and fired a shot into Slaughter. Slaughter turned and fell to the ground. Thomson fired one more shot into Slaughter as he laid on the ground.

After being shot, Slaughter did not lose consciousness although he was paralized. Slaughter asked Thomson to take him to the nearby Martin home for help. Thomson and his son, William, transported the stricken man to the Martin place. The Martin family accepted the wounded man into their home and cared for him. Immediately after delivering Slaughter to the Martin farm Thomson went into Porterville and surrendered himself to Justice of the Peace E.W. Beebee.

Justice Beebee arranged with local law enforcement officers to transport Thomson to the jail in Visalia. Perhaps Thomson felt that Slaughter was going to die. While being booked into jail he replied; "Forty seven – Old enough to die," when the booking officer asked him his age. Thomson was charged with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to commit murder and released from custody on bail.

Tim Slaughter was given an even chance to survive, but, as it turned out, his physicians didn't realize how injured he was. He failed to improve, and by February 6, 1903, Slaughter knew that his days were numbered. Tulare County Deputy District Attorney R.F. Roth and Superior Court Reporter T.A. Elliot visited Slaughter and took a "dying statement" from him regarding the circumstances surrounding his shooting.

On February 9, 1903, Tim Slaughter died from his wounds. Dr. M.L. Pettit conducted an autopsy on his remains and discoverd that a bullet had lodged in Slaughter's spinal column, which had caused Slaughter's paralysis and ultimate death. Further, the bullet had entered Slaughter's back and ranged upward until coming to rest in the spine. The coroner's inquest was held the same day, and the jury concluded; "Death was caused from gunshot wounds inflicted by Alex Thomson with the intent to commit murder." The jury also found that Slaughter was thirty three years of age at the time of his death and that he was born in Tennessee. He was divorced at the time and had two children. Slaughter was interred in the Porterville cemetery and Thomson was rearrested for murder.

On February 11, 1903, Thomson's preliminary hearing for murder in the first degree was held in the Porterville justice court. District Attorney Daniel McFadzean prosecuted the case, and Attorney J.E. Shuey conducted the defense. Justice Beebee found that the evidence supported a felony trial, and he transferred the matter to the Supior Court in Visalia.

Thomson's trial was held in the Superior Court during the week of April 13, 1903, before Judge W.B. Wallace. Daniel McFadzean assisted by Attorney Maurice E. Power, continued the prosecution, and J.E. Shuey continued with the defense. Some of the jurors were John Hambright, D.W. Shippey, W.M. Collins, Walter Fry, Walter Rouse, J.C. Hill, S.B. Garrett, F.N. Bump, and E.S. Hobler. Testimony was taken, but by April 21st it was apparent that the jury could not agree on a verdict. Eight jurors stood for an aquittal while four of them favored conviction. The jury was discharged, and a retrial was set for May 19, 1903.

By June 19, 1903, a jury was secured for Thomson's second trial. The jury members were; W.M. Robertson, Patrick Slowey, Jacob Brolliar, J. Crangle, Rudolph Muller, William H. Howard, J.E. Goad, E.F. Hart, D.T. Peabody, E.W. Strong, Alma Hall and Benjamin Snow. Also on June 19th Thomson's son, William, testified as did Slaughter's brother.

California State Archives

ALEXANDER THOMSON upon entering San Quentin Prison on July 9, 1905, for murder second degree.

The trial progressed, and on the morning of June 23rd the jury found Alexander Thomson guilty of murder in the second degree. After this verdict, the jury recommended that Thomson receive the "mercy of the court." It wasn't an easy verdict. On the first ballot five of the jurors stood for murder in the first degree; five more for murder in the second degree and two of them for manslaughter. Three more ballots were taken before the final verdict was rendered.

At the time the maximum sentence in prison for murder second degree was life, and the minimum was ten years. Judge Wallace sentenced Thomson to San Quentin Prison for sixteen years.

Alexander Thomson arrived at the institution on July 9, 1905, after he had exausted all court appeals, and he was assigned inmate number 21231. His prison record indicates that upon entry he was forty nine years of age, and his occupation was "Teamster." He was five feet two and five eights inches tall, medium complexion, blue eyes and had light brown hair. He was later assigned work as a "sack snatcher" in the prison jute mill. Thomson created no problems in prison, and after serving exactly ten years of his sentence he was released on July 9, 1915. Upon his release he was also restored to citizenship, and his prison ordeal was behind him.

When released from prison, Thomson was no longer married, and, in addition, he suffered from a serious heart ailment. He went to live with his son, William, and his wife, Helen, in Tipton. William was the proprietor of a livery stable, and in spite of his illness, Alexander helped William as a liveryman.

Alexander Thomson, at the age of sixty one years, deceased in Tipton from disease of the heart valves on December 26, 1916, and he was buried in the Plano cemetery. His later years were shrouded in unhappiness and tragedy, and all because two men reacted intemperately to a disagreement over a rent bill, which caused a shooting in Plano.

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Topical Index of Los Tulares, Nos. 151 to 179

This is a sequel to the index of Nos. 1 to 150 in Issue No. 154, both compiled by Annie Mitchell.

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A LOST GOLD MINE

From the March 26, 1898, issue of the Visalia Daily Times comes this story, signed only with the initial B. It begins with the rescue of a white man, the Indians were to call White Coyote, or Long Hair, who wandered across the mountains from the east in 1840 and down the Kaweah river. He was ill and nearly starved when he reached the Waksachi Indian village which was on the north side of the river near the confluence of the North Fork and the Middle Fork. At this place in 1881 Montgomery Barton was to build a two-story house which he sold to Jim and Julia Pierce in 1908 and which today is occupied by Julie Doctor.

As it was June when Long Hair, as we will call him, arrived opposite the Waksachi village, the river was high, and the Indians sent four strong young men across the river to bring him to their village, where he spent months being restored to health. During this time a party of Spanish came from the coast to prospect for gold and may have left the windlass that Lt. George Derby found at Mud Springs when he explored the county in 1850. They also prospected in the Sulphur Springs area before ascending Salt Creek and finally up the North Fork to Eshom valley, where they opened a mine, cutting steps down the face of a cliff to gain access.

It was said that they occasionally came back to Eshom valley and gave gold nuggets to Indians, especially the girls. Supposedly the miners built seven cabins, the remains of which were visible for many years afterward, and the mine became known as the Seven Cabins mine.

The miners came and went for a few years but ultimately wore out their welcome with the Indians, who attacked the mine and massacred all but three of the miners, who escaped with two mules and were ultimately trapped and slain in the brush near the site of the present Kaweah Post Office. Long Hair left the area but returned occasionally. The Indians decided to kill him lest his reports of gold bring more prospectors to the area, but he ambushed the plotters and killed eight of them.

Vaqueros tried to track him and even measured the shoes of his horse at the Visalia livery stable, but in the night he got on his horse and rode out of town. That same night an old man S. N. Grigsby was slain as he slept in Kraft's restaurant in Visalia and the vaqueros were afraid to leave town next day lest they be accused of his murder.

Long Hair was reported to have been a Captain John Moss, a Mormon Danite, later an intelligence person for the Confederacy, but his mine is still lost although many persons have tried to find it.

—o—

The first woman California legislator, Grace Storey Dorris, was elected from Kern county in 1918 without a single vote from members of her sex.

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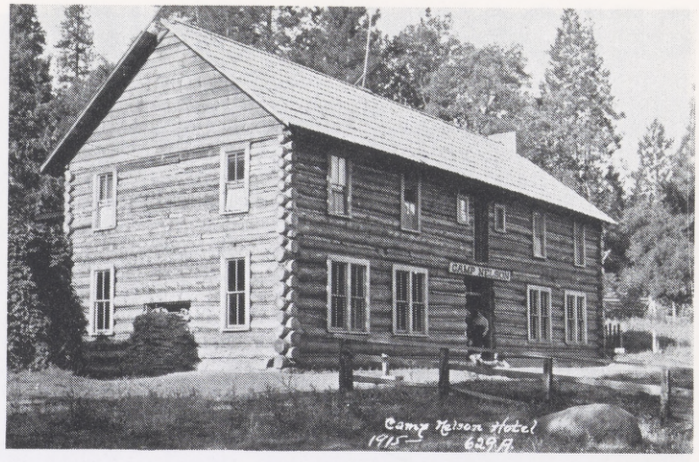

Visalia Lynching—and the 1873 Vigilantes

By Annie Mitchell

In reference to Jeff's copy of the 1873 Vigilantes— — —This refers back to the lynching of James McCrory on December 24, 1872. Leland Edwards has an article on McCrory in Los Tulares # 162. I think I can add a few details to a rather ironic twist to the lynching.

McCrory was lynched over the Court Street Bridge in Visalia which would be between what is now Center and Main Streets. Since Mill Creek is covered it is rather difficult to locate it exactly by present streets. The ironic part of the lynching concerns the dedication of Visalia's new school house on that same night. There was not enough money to furnish the school so the ladies of the community cooked a fine Christmas Eve dinner and charged $7.00 a ticket and were able to supply the necessary items. The people who lived south of the school (the site of the present day Tulare County-Visalia Library) had to cross the bridge on the way home. I once talked to Austin Grant who was about ten years of age at the time and he remembered the scene vividly!

After a time a collection was taken up long Saloon row and money was given to bury McCrory who was buried in Visalia along with a child who died in 1867.

The State press commented upon the lynching. This is from the Sacramento Bee January 4, 1873.

"Noble Visalians, you have returned to the practice of primitive days of '49, when if a man murdered another, he was hanged, in maintenance of Justice, if not in maintenance of law; for then the people could not see, and did not see, why these two principles of Society should be divorced. You hanged a man because he had murdered another, and did not wait for court or jury to tell when and how not to do it. And by so doing you have carried more terror to the hearts of scoundrels than could a score of judicials executions. You had, of course, an extraordinary case to work upon, or you would not have swerved from the beaten path, but in such a case a temporary return to the days of '49 does a power of good sometimes. It will keep your atmosphere comparatively clear for years to come."

As far as I know this was the only lynching except one in Porterville that no one ever admitted seeing.

—o—

NEW MEMBERS

We have some summer recruits as new members for the Tulare County Historical Society, in time for the Sacramento Amtrac trip and the Oct. 10 annual dinner meeting. The June recruits are Judith C. Price of Garden Grove. In July Steve and Brenda Sampietro of Visalia, courtesy of Kevin Caskey, became members.

Donations for the Memory Walk include from June Sherman for Walter Long and Dan and Diana S. Dooley for Marge Adams.

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DEPOSITION OF HON. THOMAS FOWLER

Taken at the Grand Hotel, San Francisco, April 3, 1884.

Mr. Fowler. I was born in the County Down, Parrish of Saul, Ireland, in the year 1829. I lived there with my parents, until I reached the age of 14 or 15 years, when I emigrated to New York. I remained in New York, with the exception of a short trip to Canada, until about 1850 or 1851, and then went to Texas. From there I came to California with a drove of cattle. This was my first trip to California. I settled in that portion of the State which is now known as Tulare County, but at that time there were but few counties in the State. There was no Fresno, Tulare, Merced, Stanislaus, Inyo or Mono Counties. There were none of those counties at that time.

In what is now called Tulare County, there were but 18 settlers. Immediately upon my arrival there, I commenced the business of raising Cattle and driving them to the mines, where they were sold.

I found this business very profitable, and in one trip have sold as much as one hundred thousand dollars worth of cattle. In the course of my business as a cattle-dealer and raiser, I have sold cattle to most of the prominent butchers of San Francisco, —Miller & Lux, Dunphy & Co., and others. At present I am not in the Cattle business very extensively.

I own, in my own interest, in the Southern part of the State, about 25 or 30,000 acres of land. A good deal of it is in Tulare and Fresno Counties.

I made two trips into Mexico, for cattle, and kept raising them and driving them over to the State of Nevada, for the Nevada or Washoe mines. I returned from there in 1866. In that year cattle were becoming plentiful, and were getting so cheap that there was not much profit in it for the ranchmen. I then conceived the idea of buying up the cattle and keeping the prices up, in the interest of the ranchmen. I immediately commenced buying them, first at a price of ten or twelve dollars per head, and in three weeks I had raised the price of cattle from that amount, ($10 or $12 a head), to forty dollars a head. I did this myself, unaided, and much to the surprise of those who did not know my purpose. This occurred right in the streets of Visalia. The ranchers, as a matter of course, got the benifit of this. During all this time I owned the Antelope Ranch, in Tulare County, about a dozen miles from Visalia.

In 1869, when I was elected to the Senate, I had fifty-thousand head of cattle. This was my first term in the Senate, and it lasted four years. At the end of that time I was nominated again, but was defeated by 53 votes. That was in 1873. The reason of my being beaten this time was the stand I took in the "no-fence issue" which was agitating Tulare County at that time. Four years afterwards I was re-elected to the State Senate and took my seat in 1877. A short time afterwards the New Constitution was adopted, by which means I was legislated out. But for this accurence I would have kept my seat for four years.

There is about 4000 acres of land in the Antelope Ranch. In 1876 I bought the "76 Ranch." I had a very large range back of the Antelope Ranch. I bought a great many parties out, paying somewhere in the neighborhood of $175,000 to $200,000, in sums ranging from $35,000 to $86,000.

The Empire Mine. Sometime in 1877 I bought the Empire Silver Mine. There are altogether, about 100,000 shares of stock in this mine. Of those 100,000 shares, I own, at present, 98,000 shares, having sold about 2,000. When I first bought the mine I built a fine quartz-mill and tramway, established an Assay office, built stores of all kinds, and in fact, I started a regular town, right at the place where the mine is situated. I did this all myself, at my own personal expense. I never sold a share of this mining stock at less than ten dollars per share, and that would make it worth about a million dollars. The stock would have sold, at one time, for about forty dollars a share. The ore from this mine assays all the way from $10 up to $15.00 a ton. It is a little rebellious. This fact contributed largely to my embarrassment—If the ore had not been rebellious, I would have had no difficulty in settling at once with my creditors, who soon afterwards took advantage of my not being able to get the silver from the quartz immediately, to sue me. If the ore had not been rebellious I would not have had to ask for any odds. I was the man that opened the mine—one of the first prospectors. I went down a natural shaft with the aid of a rope, into a cave, and found the ore. The ore showed up so rich that I purchased the mine and paid fifty-thousand dollars for it. I then commenced to put men to work on it, in 1877. I built a tollroad to the mine which cost me about one hundred thousand dollars. I never could tell the real amount that this mine did cost me. I drove cattle and sheep there all the time, and had them slaughtered, for the use of the men at the mine, and never kept an account of it all. I just drove them there and had them slaughtered. This continued up to 1879 and 1880, when my creditors sued me and I had to close the mine. I am in litigation now with Mr. Walter M. Hawley, of the firm of Marcus C. Hawley, and others, in fact, with almost everybody that I owed anything to.

I own a tract of land on King's River, which controls the water of the different irrigating ditches and canals in Fresno and Tulare Counties, about 320 acres, that some parties want to buy, and I asked them one thousand dollars an acre for it, or $320,000.

Before the County of Tulare was organized, there were fourteen men killed by the Indians, and Woods, (one of them) was skinned alive.

When the fight was made for the County Seat of Visalia, there was only twenty-five votes polled, all told, in the whole County. We had to get an old trapper in to vote, in order to make the 13 votes necessary to change the County seat from Woodville to Visalia. This was in 1853, when the County of Tulare was first inaugurated. The Fresno County was organized, I think, in 1855. I might be mistaken in regard to the year but I don't think so. There was only twenty-five when the County was organized. I was over in Fresno when Fresno County was organized. Up to that time Los Angeles and Mariposa were the only counties in the whole valley. There was no Stanislaus, no Merced, no Inyo, no Mono, no Tulare, no Kern and no Fresno Counties.

I was married on the 27th day of October, 1868, by Father Joe Gallagher, in the town of Alvarado, right within twenty miles of this city. My wife is the daughter of Captain Farley. I was married one year before I was elected to the Senate.

In 1868 I was the Grand Marshal of the Democratic Torchlight Procession in San Francisco. I lost about forty-thousand dollars in the Seymour fight.

I have four children living,—two died. I have a boy 15 years of age. I live in Visalia. I own the Empire store there, and the Antelope Ranch, which is about twelve miles from that place. This is my original ranch. When I first went to that part of the State I took up Government land; then I bought a great many persons out. I cannot remember the number that I bought out, there were so many. The principal person that I am in litigation with is Walter M. Hawley, of the firm of Marcus C. Hawley.

Mussel Slough. My present mission to San Francisco is to arbitrate the Mussel Slough matters, as between the Southern Pacific Railroad Company and the Settlers in that portion of the Country. I am at present unable to say what the result will be, but hope to effect a compromise that will be satisfactory to both parties. I am chairman of a Committee sent here for that purpose by the Mussel Slough Settlers.

California Manuscripts D 258, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkley.

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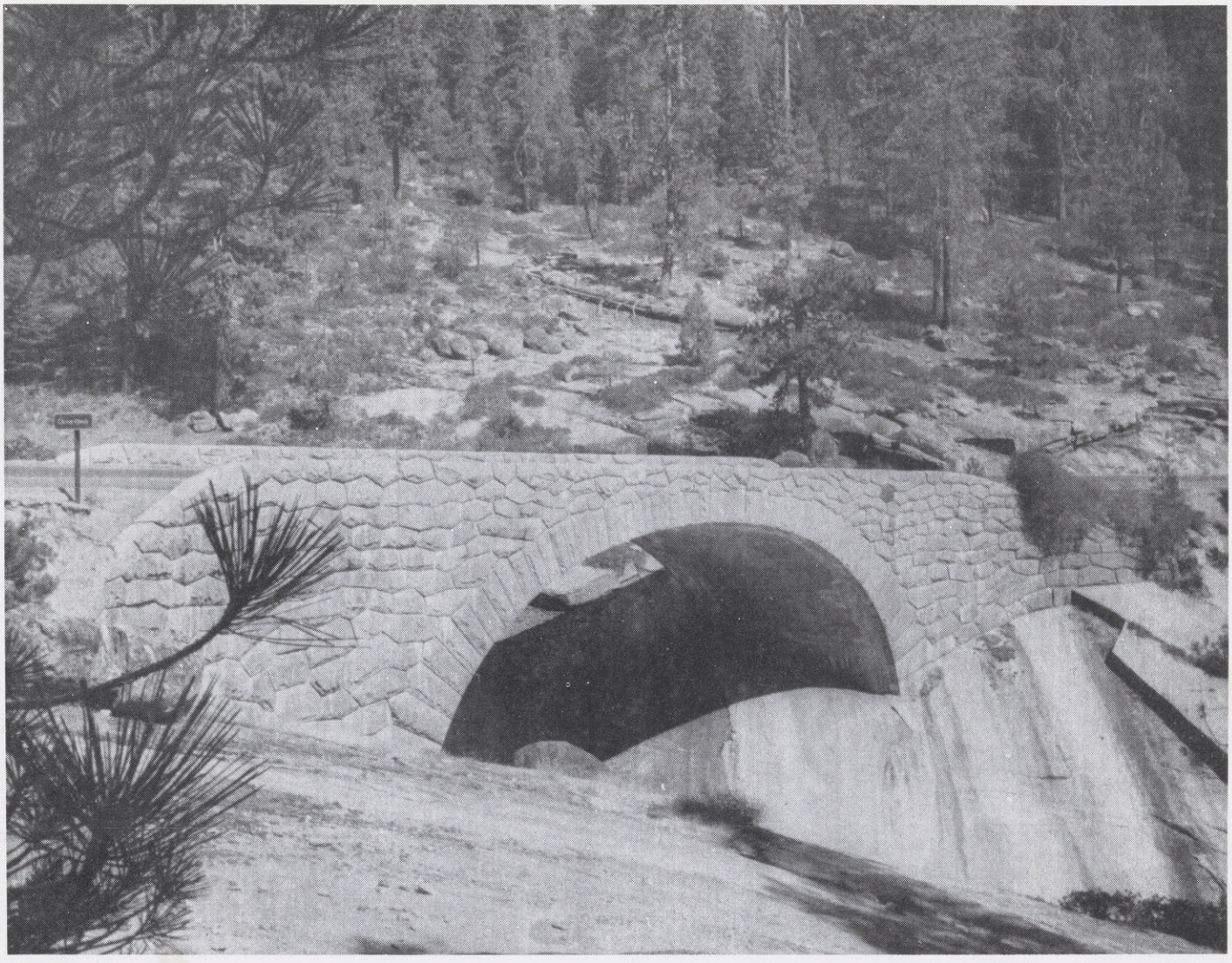

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL bridges in California is this structure on the Generals Highway between Lodgepole and Grant Grove in Sequoia National Park. The stone arch spans Clover Creek, the stones in the walls having been hand cut to pattern by a crew of Finnish stonecutters in 1932.

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual dinner meeting of the Tulare County Historical Society will be held October 10 at Sequoia Mining on Highway 198 at old Merryman Station east of Exeter. The speaker will be John Elliott, Three Rivers historian who is serving the Mineral King Preservation Association as manager of its efforts to preserve the rights of cabin owners at Mineral King.

The TCHS will issue a flyer detailing the necessity to make reservations for the dinner in advance and the charge for the dinner. The meeting is scheduled for 3 p.m. and the dinner at 4 p.m.

—o—

HISTORIC EDITOR

Homer J. Wood, publisher and editor of the Porterville Recorder for half a century, was an innovator of importance in our county. He came to Visalia in 1895, was a carrier for the Visalia Morning Delta and high school correspondent for the paper. He played on the first Visalia High School football team his brother, Walton, organized in 1896. Homer Wood organized the first Visalia high school orchestra, played cornet in the town band and played baseball. Also an attorney, he organized the San Francisco Rotary Club and the Oakland Rotary Club before coming to Porterville.

STAFFORDS CORNER

We know it now as Elderwood, but in the days when teamsters hauling lumber from the Millwood and other lumber mills in the mountains it was known as Staffords Corner, a popular rendezvous for teamsters and others on the road to Badger and other destinations. It is to be the scene of the next TCHS historical marker with arrangements being made by our immediate ex-president and chairman of the marker committee, Lyman Treaster. A date for the dedication has not yet been set.

—o—

A Trip By Amtrac

In response to some agitation from the membership, a historic trip to Sacramento via Amtrac is being arranged for Sept. 25-26. A reservation will be necessary, a flyer will be sent by the society regarding reservations and program, which includes the Railway Museum with trains that actually run on the tracks and a chance to see the many antique locomotives and cars that are part of the exhibit. Visits are also planned to the Crocker Art Gallery and other points of interest. Details will be given in the flyer. Ora Kay Peterson is in charge.

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LOS TULARES
TULARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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QUARTERLY BULLETIN
NUMBER 181
SEPTEMBER 1993

NEXT MEETING:

Don't forget the annual dinner of the TCHS at Sequoia Mining on the afternoon of Oct. 10. Notices of the meeting will be sent with information about reservations in advance.

This photo of the old Cinnamon school at Three Rivers is from the collection of the late Dawrence Glenn. Note on the picture say it was taken sometime between 1895 and 1900 but as the usual situation with any old pictures, there is no identification of the individuals. Dawrence's note says ask Ester Peck but she doesn't go that far back.

FIRST BRICKS

In 1859, C.P. Majors had a brick yard half a mile south of the courthouse in Visalia. "I can make brick better, cheaper, and on shorter notice than any other in this part of the county," he boasted.

—o—

In 1870, ice cost three cents a pound in Visalia. It was obtained from streams and ponds in the mountains in the winter and stored for summer use.

LOS TULARES

Published in March, June, September, December

All Phones Listed are Area Code 209

Dues in the Society are for the calendar year. Individuals $5.00; Mr. and Mrs. $10.00; Sustaining $20.00; Life Membership $200.00. Send dues and correspondence (except for Los Tulares) to:

TULARE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Post Office Box 295, Visalia, California 93279

Joseph E. Doctor ..... Editor

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